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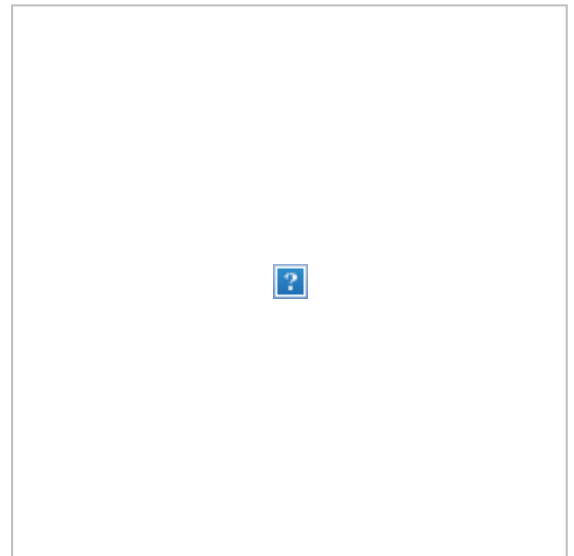
# Native American justice revisited, logo debated

on September 17, 2012 at 11:50 pm

The U's mascot was a hot topic at a social justice meeting for Native Americans on Thursday night.

Michael Bird, a Santo Domingo-San Juan Pueblo Indian and public health consultant, spoke at the College of Social Work about the impact of historical events on Native Americans.

He mentioned nine periods of perpetual flip-flopping in federal policy when dealing with Native Americans and said the current presidential administration has dealt with native people in the most enlightened manner since Nixon's presidency.



*Michael E. Bird, the first Native American president of the American Public Health*

Bird resided in Fort Douglas during his stay, and said he found it ironic that he was staying in a fort that was built to protect settlements in the Salt Lake Valley from Indian attack.

“I can stay at Fort Douglas and feel comfortable and welcome,” he said.

Despite that, Bird pointed out that discrimination continues to shape the lives of many Native Americans. Such discrimination can result in more substance abuse problems, and Native American teenagers have a higher suicide rate than other demographics.

Many promises the government has made to Native Americans are yet to be fulfilled, a fact that leads to instability and poverty for many, he said.

Although Bird didn't claim to have answers to problems Native Americans face today, he said he believes many problems would dissolve if Americans focused on developing individuality and wisdom. He said if anyone works with people who look like them, think like them and want to be like them, they are in the wrong place.

Richard Wolfgramm, a U graduate in mass communication, raised the issue of the mascot.

“Every time this comes out, we never hear anything from the Ute tribe,” Wolfgramm said.

Before the panel could respond, a member of the crowd shouted that the use of the Ute name and logo is sanctioned.

Donna Eldridge, president of the Inter-Tribal Student Association and master's student in the College of Social Work, said although one of the Ute tribes has cleared the use of the Ute name as a mascot, the use is offensive to Native Americans and should be terminated.

“The logo doesn't just affect the Ute tribe – it affects all of the tribes. It's the whole native population,” she said. “It perpetuates negative stereotypes of Native Americans.”

In addition to the logo itself, Eldridge said she finds students' behavior at games offensive. She

*Association, speaks at the College of Social Work's Okazaki Room Thursday. Bird shared his experiences as an advocate marginalized communities regarding access to healthcare, government policy and social justice for Native Americans.*

mentioned specifically the headdresses and face paint used at the U's athletic games.

“Why is it OK to paint your face red?” she asked. “You see a lot of it at games, and it’s not OK.”

Several speakers will be addressing the issue in a few weeks, investigating the way the mascot’s use misrepresents Native Americans, Eldridge said.

“The use of it relives the historical trauma and the oppression that we’ve gone through,” she said.

Bird said Native Americans have been seen as “ethnic” for long enough.

“As far as we’re concerned, everyone is an immigrant,” he said.

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Well I think if we're going to stop using "Ute" we'd better rename the State of Utah too, since it's based on Ute. Maybe something like Deseret?

I'm pretty sure drums, feathers and face paint aren't exclusive to Native Americans. Have you ever been to Africa, or several other places? I don't understand why they think they just have exclusivity to that kind of stuff.

L

**ADRIENNE** on 20 September, 2012 at 20:04[Reply](#)

First of all JAKE, I don't feel that they think that they are the only ones that have exclusivity to that kind of stuff. I think you are missing the point. The fact is it's wrong because it causes pain to people. Just think if your mom was raped, and you were treated like a bastard, looked down upon and every time you saw a picture of your mother across someone's face and her rape was taken lightly and looked down upon as "we are just having fun," I'm sure you would view it as an insult. That's how they view it, they were raped of their dignity and made to be a joke to society. So next time you want to take something like this so lightly think of your mother and the respect she deserves and then maybe you can have a little compassion.

**DAVID** on 19 September, 2012 at 11:47[Reply](#)

Ms. Eldridge:

The reason fans paint their faces RED is because that is our dominant school color. Your ignorance and insinuation that we're being racist is offensive, and racist in its own right.

Wait until our Blackout game vs. Oregon St. Watch and see how many fans paint their faces BLACK. Then watch to see the NAACP be NOT offended by it.



**SAM** on 19 September, 2012 at 16:40

[Reply](#)

If you had attended the presentation you would have known that Ms. Eldridge was not referring to the mere act of painting one's face red but was referring to the fans who paint their face red, put on a headdress and Native American regalia, and "whoop" around pretending to be what they believe epitomizes a "Ute." How is that not offensive? The same argument could be made for anyone who paints their face black and models historical archetypes of African Americans. And believe me, the NAACP would be all over that!

---



**WILLEM** on 19 September, 2012 at 22:46

[Reply](#)

This is a very interesting issue that needs to be assessed in a straightforward manner so that we don't disrespect the actual Ute Tribe, and not focus on those who are simply offended FOR them.

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**DAVID** on 20 September, 2012 at 09:56

[Reply](#)

Sam:

That really sounds like a whole lot of nonsense to me. I'm an Italian-American, but neither I nor any Italian heritage-born person I'd ever met had been offended by caricatures of a fat jolly old handle-bar mustachioed guido dancing with a pizza in his arm, but look at the image of the majority of pizza boxes not-named Pizza Hut, Dominos, or Little Caesars.

And for the record, the Little Caesars toga wearing Roman isn't offensive either. So do native americans think all Italians are fat Romans? If not, why would they assume we think all "indians" paint their faces, wear eagle feathers and whoop around like a bunch of savages?

Do you know what would be "offensive"? "Offensive" would be if we changed our mascot to from the "Utes" to the "Klansmen". If Utah would host "Whiteout" games, where the fans would all wear white sheets and white hoods, and whoop around saying

“white power” and burning a cross behind the endzone after every TD, and the Drum & Feather were replaced with the letters “KKK”....THAT would be offensive.

It would be offensive to all African-Americans. It would be offensive to all Jewish-Americans. It would be offensive to all DECENT white, anglo-saxon protestants who deplore such a disgusting, meritless, and vile organization. The Neo-Nazis would most likely ALSO be offended, but only because we didn't change our mascot to “Skin heads”. Pretty much the only organization who WOULDN'T be offended would have been the KKK themselves. Because being Utah's mascot (a Pac-12 mascot no less) can ONLY serve to draw attention to what SHOULD be a proud lineage of the race of individuals who lived along the Salt Lake Valley for over a 1,000 yrs before we did. If the Utes were lowly and detestable – like the KKK for example – there would have been NO CHANCE we would have chosen them to represent our sports teams and student body.

I stand by my position. Ute fans wearing headdresses and painting their faces red AREN'T racist. Whiney hypersensitive busybodies like Ms. Donna Eldridge ARE!

L



**MR. ANONYMOUS** on 20 September, 2012 at 10:58

[Reply](#)

David, would it change your mind if you discovered that this kind of thing has a negative effect on people's lives? Would it change your mind if you discovered that this kind of thing contributes to an increase in suicides among native american students? Because the research indicates that it does.



**DAVID** on 21 September, 2012 at 18:07

[Reply](#)

Mr. Anonymous:

It would NOT change my opinion. I simply don't believe that native americans commit suicide based on fan dress and fan behavior at Utah football games.

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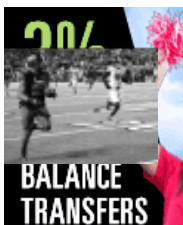
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